

FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

REVIEW PANEL MINUTES

SUMMER 2017

Date: June 15, 2017 [Yellowstone Pioneer Lodge, Livingston MT]

Attendees: Karin Boyd, Chuck Dalby, Senator Jedediah Hinkle, Michael Johns, Alan Johnstone, Clint Peck, Meriweather Schroeder-Smith, Bill Semmens, Jim Stone, Representative Matt Regier, Bill Wichers, Joseph Willauer, Nancy Winslow, Terry Chute (phone)

FWP staff: Michelle McGree, Jonathan Ferree, Beth Giddings

Applicants and others in attendance: Ladd Knotek, Carol Endicott, Dale White, Levi Doll, Willie Doll, Loren Ruport, Ron Pierce, Scott Gillilan, Park Branch Canal water users, Rob Roberts (phone), Ted Nelson

Panel business:

Introductions, welcomed new member Rep. Matt Regier, approved agenda, reviewed Program balances.

Application discussions and funding recommendations:

- 1) **Blackfoot River fish screen** (020-2017). The mainstem Blackfoot River is a tributary to the Clark Fork River and supports two imperiled fish species, Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout. This project is located in an area that is considered a migratory area for both Bull and Westslope Cutthroat Trout, and is a critical Bull Trout area. This project would screen an irrigation diversion by installing a low-maintenance Farmer's fish screen with a headgate to allow for hydraulic control. A limited amount of instream wood and willow plantings would be installed along the river bank margin to protect the new infrastructure. The goal is to eliminate fish entrainment, improve migratory corridors, and allow for efficient irrigation practices

Amount Requested: \$49,949

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (**\$49,949**) if the applicant can discuss operation and maintenance.

Project Representative: Ron Pierce (FWP)

Discussion Items:

- Concern over the recent stream migration and future migrations that may move the stream away from the diversion. Response: it is the best location for a diversion point and there is confidence it will stay in the current channel.
- Ranch will assume maintenance of the screen, will be part of the landowner agreement.
- Currently no better bull trout project, according to Ron Pierce (biologist).

Motion: Motion to approve the recommended amount of **\$49,949**

Motion Made by: Nancy Winslow

Motion Second by: Chuck Dalby

Panel Action: Approved Unanimously

Amount Approved: \$49,949

- 2) **Deer Creek road decommissioning** (021-2017). Deer Creek is a tributary to Seeley Lake and is within the Marshall Creek Wildlife Management Area. It currently supports populations of native Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout. The property was purchased in 2010 and contain hundreds of miles of old logging roads. The larger project would restore the integrity of headwater basins adjacent to and upstream of known spawning and rearing areas for native trout. This specific proposed component would remove numerous undersized culverts, decommission roads, reconstruct stream crossings, and undertake large scale revegetation. The goal is to protect and enhance native Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout populations.

Amount Requested: \$20,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (**\$20,000**) but would like the applicant to comment on opportunities to collaborate and use funds most efficiently.

Project Representative: Ladd Knotek (FWP)

Discussion Items:

- Road segments directly affect spawning areas
- Concerns about decommissioning road and reducing public access. Response: this issue has been discussed and the roads chosen leave public access. Narrow walking paths will be retained on decommissioned roads so hikers can access and cars cannot.
- Sediment delivery is significant.
- Question regarding drainage. The proposed roads are near water and the entire road prism will be removed.
- Wildlife is doing own work separate of these areas.

Motion: Motion to approve the requested amount of \$20,000 for the project.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Michael Johns

Panel Action: 11 Yes, 2 No; Motion passes

Amount Approved: \$20,000

- 3) **Dry Creek channel restoration** (022-2017). Dry Creek is a tributary to the East Gallatin River. It currently supports a population of Brown Trout, and Mountain Whitefish, Rainbow Trout, and Brook Trout may be present. The Dry Creek drainage has experienced channelization, sedimentation, irrigation withdrawals, and fish passage problems. As part of a watershed effort, projects to improve water quality, habitat, and stream function have been initiated. This project would improve stream habitat in the lower section of Dry Creek, downstream of the fish passage project. Spawning, rearing, and resident trout habitat would be improved by re-naturalizing the channelized section downstream of the diversion upgrade. This includes the establishment of more pools and improved riparian habitat. Willow, aspen, and chokecherry would be planted to establish cover along the stream corridor. Large woody debris would be placed in the channel to form scour pools and provide overhead cover. The goal is to increase spawning, rearing, and resting habitat. This project is not eligible for RIT funding.

Amount Requested: \$9,258

FWP Recommendation: We recommend partial funding of 50% of the project cost (\$7,439). We ask the applicant to address plant protection, recruitment, and woody placement.

Project Representative: Scott Gillilan (Gillilan Associates)

Discussion Items:

- Most planted species aren't prone to browse, and it is expected that they won't recruit naturally over time.
- Focus on riparian species for competition with reed canary grass.
- Question of whirling disease concern with reconnection with E. Gallatin River.
- Upstream manager will pay for flume and work with engineer. It will accommodate the water right and a 100 year flood. A siphon was not chosen due to maintenance concerns.

Motion: Motion to approve requested amount of \$9,258.

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Joe Willauer

Panel Action: Approved Unanimously

Amount Approved: \$9,258

- 4) **Horse Creek grazing and stream restoration** (024-2017). Horse Creek (Park County) is a tributary to the Shields River and currently supports populations of nonhybridized Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout and is considered to be of high conservation value. The project area has been degraded by grazing practices. The applicant proposes to install riparian fencing, create off stream stock water, and restore eroding terraces by creating floodplain benches with wetland sod. Mature willow will be planted on site. The goal is to improve water quality and improve habitat in an important cutthroat trout stream. This project was tabled in the Winter 2016 funding cycle due to limited funds, questions about the off-stream water system, and its significance to Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout conservation priorities.

Amount Requested: \$26,228

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (\$26,228) if the applicant can provide additional information on the maintenance and magnitude of fishery impact.

Project Representative: Carol Endicott (FWP), Ted Nelson (NRCS)

Discussion Items:

- Erosion is a concern on Horse Creek and project will improve water quality.
- Solar is a better option long-term and will be easier on the landowner.
- Minor loss to grazing AUM's, as they are using two pastures.
- Off stream water was used to avoid channel alternations and additional maintenance.
- Migratory fish aren't common in the shields and there may be some brook trout and brown trout but they could be isolated from this reach by a culvert.

Motion: Motion to approve the recommended amount of \$26,228

Motion Made by: Chuck Dalby

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Approved Unanimously

Amount Approved: \$26,228

- 5) **LaValle Creek fish passage** (025-2017). LaValle Creek (Missoula County) is a tributary to the Clark Fork River that supports only non-introgressed (genetically pure) Westslope Cutthroat Trout. This population occupies approximately 4-5 miles of stream and is managed to sustain genetic purity. This project is intended to ensure connectivity within the reach they currently occupy. Two undersized culverts, likely serving as velocity barriers during high flow periods and disrupting natural hydrologic function, would be replaced with wood bridges that meet stream simulation and 100-year flood criteria. The goal is to enhance upstream passage for stream-resident, genetically pure Westslope Cutthroat Trout and help ensure long-term persistence. This project was tabled in the Winter 2016 funding cycle due to limited funds.

Amount Requested: \$18,520

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (**\$18,520**) if the applicant can confirm that Missoula County will assume future maintenance.

Project Representative: Ladd Knotek (FWP)

Discussion Items:

- The bridges are designed for a 100-year flow.

Motion: Approve the project as requested (\$18,520), contingent upon a signed maintenance agreement.

Motion Made by: Joe Willauer

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Approved Unanimously

Amount Approved: \$18,520

- 6) **Little Warm Reservoir dam repair** (026-2017). Little Warm Reservoir is an on-stream reservoir for Little Warm Creek and contains game and prairie fishes. The primary species affected by project improvements are walleye, yellow perch, and black crappie. This project would repairing the dam, which is expected to facilitate higher water levels and improve the fisheries through improved spawning habitat, rearing habitat, and refuge under drought conditions. It is expected to stabilize reservoir levels which should improve population densities and directly affect angler catch rates. This project is not eligible for RIT funding as its benefits are tied to non-native species.

Amount Requested: \$100,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend partial funding (**\$ amount dependent on available funds**) if the applicant can describe access, maintenance, and stocking.

Project Representative: Levi Doll (landowner), Willie Doll (landowner), Loren Ruport (USFWS)

Discussion Items:

- There is wetland value and Ducks Unlimited is invested due to waterfowl benefits. Malta Walleyes Unlimited and Wounded Warriors are also supportive.
- Improves public recreational opportunity but no camping, boat ramp provided. Planning to use a geoweb boat ramp to keep costs down.
- Applicant will address the concern with the spillway slope.

- Reservoir access crosses state and small private land easement. Access will be posted to and they will credit cooperators.
- Additional funding will affect this project going forward. Landowner will contribute to this and will look into RRGL program.
- Partial funding would cause them to spend more money out of pocket.
- Error in the budget regarding miles of hauling (300 vs. 3000 miles).
- Panel support for project, but concern over the amount of available funds for the biennium and what would remain for last 3 grant cycles if fully funded.

1st Motion: Approve the requested amount of \$100,000

1st Motion Made by: Michael Johns

2nd Motion: Approve \$50,000, contingent on acceptable site design

2nd Motion Made by: Chuck Dalby

3rd Motion: Approve \$75,000, contingent on acceptable site design

3rd Motion made by: Jed Hinkle

3rd Motion Second by: Bill Wichers

Panel Action: 1st motion failed. 2nd motion failed. 3rd motion approved unanimously.

Amount Approved: \$75,000 contingent on acceptable site design

- 7) **Park Branch Canal irrigation efficiency** (027-2017). The Park Branch and Paradise Canals in Park County come off the Yellowstone River and divert water to various landowners. This project would replace existing, obsolete flow monitors with new water measuring systems on the canals. Water level and flow would be calculated accurately, which would allow water users to show their use is within the legal limit and might be able to alter management. The goal of this project is to measure flow rate and water use on several reaches of the canals.

Amount Requested: \$20,526

FWP Recommendation: We recommend tabling this project (\$0) due to the weak link and commitment to improve the fishery benefit. We request that the application develop a long-term plan for the project.

Project Representative: Park Branch Canal water users

Discussion Items:

- Will there be voluntary reductions? Response: They don't know if what they are using currently.
- Other funding sources may be appropriate, including DEQ or DNRC. Match is a question.
- Measuring flow rate and water use does not demonstrate a clear fishery benefit on this stretch of the Yellowstone River.

Motion: Motion to table the requested amount of \$20,526

Motion Made by: Joseph Willauer

Motion Second by: Clint Peck

Panel Action: Table

Amount Approved: \$0

- 8) **Rattlesnake Creek Cobban fish screen** (028-2017). Rattlesnake Creek (Missoula County) is a tributary to the Clark Fork River that is a primary spawning tributary for both native Bull Trout

and Westslope Cutthroat Trout, as well as fluvial rainbow and Brown Trout. Rattlesnake Creek has several ditches, most of which were screened in 2002 (FFIP 022-2002) with brencaill-type screens. The brencaill screen on the Cobban ditch does not function as intended; it requires maintenance up to four times a day during high flow. The water users have begun to drill holes in the screen to help alleviate the clogging. This project would replace the current screen with a vertical plate, paddlewheel-driven screen. Several other projects upgraded other screens in the Rattlesnake Creek drainage (FFIP 034-2015, 025-2016). The intent of the project is to prevent fish entrainment and increase spawning habitat for salmonids in the Rattlesnake Creek drainage.

Amount Requested: \$14,000

FWP Recommendation: We recommend full funding (**\$14,000**) if the applicant can confirm who is responsible for operation & maintenance.

Project Representative: Rob Roberts (TU), phone

Discussion Items:

- How accessible is it to the public? Is it dangerous? Response: It is on city property, but they are installing a fence and will enclose the paddlewheel to make it safe.
- There is a watershed plan for the drainage.

Motion: Approve the requested amount of \$14,000

Motion Made by: Bill Wichers

Motion Second by: Michael Johns

Panel Action: Approved Unanimously

Amount Approved: \$14,000

- 9) **Turkey Creek fish passage** (029-2017). Turkey Creek and an unnamed stream are tributaries to the Shields River. They currently support native Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout (YCT). These streams provide habitat for YCT secure from Brook Trout competition, due to a temporary perched culvert barrier and a natural bedrock barrier downstream. This project would replace culverts that are fragmenting populations within the protected stream reaches with aquatic organism passage (AOP) culverts and open critical habitat. The goal is to conserve and protect Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout and reduce sediment loading to streams. There is a mainstem barrier that was installed downstream (that included Future Fisheries funds) that will eventually (along with a Brook Trout removal project) provide 27 miles of stream habitat for YCT.

Amount Requested: \$61,090

FWP Recommendation: We recommend partial to full funding (**\$0 to 61,090**) if the applicant can address the budget and clarify culvert locations.

Project Representative: Dale White (USFS) and Carol Endicott (FWP)

Discussion Items:

- Matching dollars have been committed.
- Culvert capacity confirmed to withstand 100-year flood.
- This is a high priority project, the area is resilient to climate change. It is a necessary component to the overall watershed plan. There are 4 remaining culverts to replace.

- Slope is steep at 7% but the applicant has confidence in the design.

Motion: Motion to approve the recommended funding of \$61,090

Motion Made by: Clint Peck

Motion Second by: Joseph Willauer

Panel Action: 11 Yes, 1 No, 1 Abstain; Motion Passes

Amount Approved: \$61,090

Final Panel Business:

Review of funding recommendations and Program balances. Chose Terry Chute for project ranking process, completed travel forms, and planned the next meeting for December 14, 2017 at Montana Wild in Helena.

Adjourn